



PRESS RELEASE
*Office of the United States Attorney
Middle District of Florida*

PAUL I. PEREZ
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

400 North Tampa Street
Suite 3200
Tampa, Florida 33602
813/274-6000
813/274-6300 (Fax)

300 North Hogan Street, Suite 700
Post Office Box 600
Jacksonville, Florida 32201
904/301-6300
904/301-6310 (Fax)

80 North Hughey Avenue,
Room 201
Orlando, Florida 32801
407/648-7500
407/648-7643 (Fax)

2110 First Street,
Suite 3-137
Fort Myers, Florida 33901
239/461-2200
239/461-2219 (fax)

Contact: Steve Cole ♦ Public Affairs Specialist ♦ 813/274-6352

For Immediate Release

July 29, 2003

DEFENDANTS SENTENCED FOR
FIREARMS TRAFFICKING

Orlando, Florida –Tuesday, July 29, 2003, United States District Judge John Antoon, II, sentenced JOSE ORTIZ, age 31, Bayamon, Puerto Rico, to 18 months imprisonment. ORTIZ will also serve two years of supervised release, which includes 100 hours of community service, and must pay a \$100 special assessment to the United States. On May 2, 2003, defendant pled guilty to conspiracy to make false statements to a federally licensed firearms dealer and to deal in firearms without a federal license. JOSE ORTIZ's co-defendants, ANGEL L. MARRERO, JOAQUIN RAMIREZ, ELIAS MALDONADO, VICTOR DIAZ MARQUEZ, YAMILLE VILLANUEVA, FRANCISCO JAVIER BURGOS, JOHN ERIC RUIZ, ENRIQUE LANDRON, ERIC J. PASTRANA, and WALDEMAR GONZALEZ were previously convicted and sentenced for their participation in the firearms trafficking conspiracy.

According to court documents, from May 1997 until January 1998, the defendants, most of whom resided in Puerto Rico, traveled to Orlando, obtained Florida identification cards bearing false addresses, and purchased firearms using the Florida identification cards.

In order to purchase the firearms from the licensed dealers, the defendants lied about their addresses and States of residence on ATF Form 4473, a document which all gun buyers must truthfully complete to purchase firearms from a licensed dealer. In November 1997, the defendants began shipping the illegally obtained firearms from Orlando to Puerto Rico through United Parcel Service using false and undeliverable addresses. VICTOR DIAZ MARQUEZ, an employee of United Parcel Service in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, intercepted the shipments of firearms and delivered them to co-conspirators in Puerto Rico, where the firearms were sold on the black market. The defendants obliterated the serial numbers on the firearms before they shipped them to Puerto Rico. Some of the defendants also hired individuals to purchase firearms for them. Such individuals are commonly called "straw purchasers." The conspiracy ended in January 1998, after law enforcement officers in Puerto Rico recovered several packages of firearms. At least 79 firearms were purchased and sold during the conspiracy.

ANGEL L. MARRERO, age 29, Toa Alta, Puerto Rico and JOAQUIN RAMIREZ, age 31, Toa Alta, Puerto Rico, were each sentenced to thirty-seven months imprisonment, three years of supervised release and were required to pay a \$100 special assessment. ELIAS MALDONADO, age 30, Trujillo, Puerto Rico, was sentenced to twenty-one months imprisonment, two years of supervised release, and was required to pay a \$6,000 fine and a \$100 special assessment.

"The sentences imposed in this case reflect the serious nature of the defendants' crimes, and sends an important message that our community will not tolerate firearms trafficking," said United States Attorney Paul I. Perez.

This case was investigated by Special Agent Lori McLaughlin, of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Karen L. Gable of the Orlando Division of the United States Attorney's Office.

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